

# Nancy Johnson



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## **Johnson Authors Bill to Improve and Expand Health Care for America's Children** *Legislation Saves, Extends Pediatric Training Program*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Nancy Johnson today introduced legislation to extend a crucial pediatric medical training program at independent children's hospitals.

"Healthy kids depend on a well-trained corps of pediatricians," said Johnson, Chairman of the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee. "This bill supports our children's hospitals and gives them the necessary resources to train the doctors that care for our kids."

Johnson's bill, H.R. 4578, the Children's Hospital Education Equity Act (the CHEER Act), extends the Children's Hospital Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program through 2010. It is set to expire next year. The CHEER Act authorizes \$330 million for FY2006.

"Three cheers for the CHEER Act which supports training programs for pediatric resident physicians at children's hospitals," said Larry M. Gold, President and CEO of Connecticut Children's Medical Center, the state's only free-standing children's hospital. "Funding for graduate medical education is vital to our mission of training the doctors of the future who will care for our children and grandchildren. Special thanks to Congresswoman Nancy Johnson who has been a tireless champion and advocate on this issue for her efforts to gain approval from Congress and the President."

While representing one percent of all hospitals, independent children's hospitals train nearly one-third of all pediatricians and almost half of pediatric specialists.

Created in 1999, the CHGME program has enjoyed bipartisan support and has been a resounding success. Not only have pediatric residencies increased since the program began, but it has alleviated the financial burden put on independent children's hospitals for graduate medical training. According to the American Board of Pediatrics, the number of residents at independent children's hospitals declined by 13 percent prior to enactment of the CHGME program in 1999. Since then, that number has increased 18 percent.

"By extending this program, we preserve crucial health services for children, especially low-income kids and those with serious illnesses," Johnson said. "Children's hospitals provide hospital care for 40 percent of the children covered by Medicaid, and they provide the majority of hospital care for children with serious illnesses like cancer."